DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 040 674

HE 001 581

AUTHOR	Glenny, Lyman A.
TITLE	Institutional Autonomy for Whom?
INSTITUTION	American Association for Higher Education, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	2 Mar 70
NOTE	5p.; Paper presented at the 25th National Conference on Higher Education, Chicago, Illinois, March 2, 1970
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.35
DESCRIPTORS	*Coordination, Educational Planning, *Higher Education, Institutional Role, Planning, *Social Responsibility, State Action, *State Agencies, State Programs

ABSTRACT

The creation of statewide coordinating and planning boards has caused a great deal of concern about state interference with the autonomy of colleges and universities. The question is whether the state (society) has a stake in educational policy which might rightfully exceed the collective desires and interests of the autonomous institutions. The creation of the State coordinating agencies does infringe upon the autonomy of existing institutions, but only insofar as these institutions have imposed upon or ignored the public interest, and in that case, state interference has been desirable. Examples are: (1) the creation of public colleges in States where private colleges have long prevented the establishment of such institutions; (2) the creation of junior or senior colleges in States where the big State universities had preempted the choice locations with small branches that were expensive to attend; or (3) instituting diversity in States where the university system has tried to maintain its PhD granting monopoly. In other instances, State interference has prevented State or teachers colleges from emulating the State university, thus preserving diversity, and in some States, the State board's control over admission policies has insured more equal opportunity and less elitism. State interference has generally been limited to major policies, and has only rarely impaired specific institutional autonomy. (AF)

PRINTED BY THE STANDARD REGISTER COMPANY, U. S. A.

FORM C801

ED 040674

Group 14
Monday Morning, March 2

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY FOR WHOM?*

Lyman A. Glenny
Associate Director
Center for Research and Development
in Higher Education
University of California, Berkeley

State interference with the cherished autonomy of colleges and universities has been the focus of several studies and much speculative discussion.[1] Concern is expressed over the activities or potential activities of the statewide coordinating and planning boards which have been authorized in many states in the past fifteen years.

In 1959, Moos and Rourke asserted that state controls "represent a grave threat to the tradition of the free college or university in America."[2] They went on to say, "But at its worst a tightly coordinated system of higher education can leach quality and originality out of state colleges and universities,"[3] and that "The tendency of all topside controls is to squeeze the sovereignty of the college in the conduct of its vital responsibilities."[4]

Have the statewide boards brought about these inimical consequences? Do such boards usurp institutional freedom and autonomy? Do they leach quality and originality? This paper provides a brief set of answers to these questions.

Authors who have dealt with the subject of autonomy in higher education are forced to define it either in terms so narrow as to preclude the usefulness of the

---

*Paper presented to Discussion Group 14 on "Are state systems of persuasion, cooperation, coordination, or control harmonious with or antithetical to institutional autonomy?" at the 25th National Conference on Higher Education, sponsored by the American Association for Higher Education, Chicago, Monday, March 2, 1970. Permission to quote restricted.

[1]Moos, Malcolm and Francis Rourke, The Campus and the State, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1959.

Glenny, Lyman A., The Autonomy of Public Colleges: The Challenge of Coordination, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1959.

Minter, W. John (ed.), Campus and the Capitol, WICHE, Boulder, Colorado, 1966.

[2]Moos and Rourke, op. cit., p. 3.

[3]Ibid., p. 226.

[4]Ibid., p. 6.

HE001 581

concept or to conclude that it is so relative as to defy definitive analysis. (This author chooses the latter course.) Relative to what? Relative to the position from which one examines autonomy as student, faculty member, president, board member, director for statewide coordination, state budget officer, governor, or legislator? Relative to academic freedom, administrative independence, or policy control? Relative to the time frame of reference--past history, present practice, or future concerns? Relative to experience and reasonable expectation or to imagination and unbridled aspiration? Relative to institutional interests or the public interest?

Reflection on just a few of these quickly enumerated variables indicates that autonomy is as difficult to deal with as it is to achieve. This discussion keeps these and perhaps other variables in mind, but it eliminates from consideration two conceptual variants--academic freedom and administrative independence--which have tended to confuse most analyses of autonomy. Beyond that it is argued here that statewide coordinating agencies increase the public's freedom of choice (autonomy), and insofar as "institutional autonomy" is circumscribed by the state, they ameliorate rather than aggravate the consequences. This position is taken for the purpose of bringing some new perspectives to autonomy debates and thus should not be considered as an unqualified or definitive view of the author. It is intended to be provocative.

Only a few small groups in the society would argue against the protection of academic freedom, defined as the right of faculty and students to pursue the search for truth, reveal their findings and engage in the teaching-learning process. The substance of this concept is eliminated from further discussion because it has not historically been the focus of controversy between institutions and the state in establishing state planning and coordinating boards. Further, the authors of recent studies on planning and coordination do not indicate that academic freedom is the basis for present tensions.[5]

The other variant which is eliminated from further consideration, administrative independence, cannot so easily be erased from the minds of presidents and other officers. However, the recent studies agree that many of the atrocity stories about autonomy[6] concern infringements by extra-institutional bureaucrats on the discretionary powers of in-college bureaucrats about administrative details. Even while being admonished by the well-known dictum that accumulated small infringements may erode the very substance of liberty, one can dismiss jurisdictional squabbling over administrative procedural matters which do not affect academic freedom or important educational policy.

---

[5]The major findings of three important studies were discussed at a two-day workshop in St. Louis in January, 1970. All three studies are in final stages of editing and press. The research scholars and their subjects were:

Berdahl, Robert (University of Buffalo): Statewide Systems of Higher Education

Mayhew, Lewis (Stanford University): Survey of Coordinating and Planning Boards

Palola, Ernest (Center for Research & Development, University of California Berkeley): Statewide Planning for the 70's

[6]Moos and Rourke relate a fairly exhaustive list.

Educational policy should be the substance around which discussions of autonomy revolve. Who makes policy? Toward what objectives? For which segments of college clientele? By what educational means? These are questions at the heart of the matter. Should each institution have absolute autonomy in answering these questions--without regard for answers which other autonomous institutions provide? Does the state (the society) have a stake which might rightfully exceed the collective desires and interests of the autonomous institutions? Should that stake be recognized and means taken to provide for it? Should the state allow institutions to engage in wasteful duplication of programs, roles, and functions? Should the state attempt to obtain optimum service from scarce resources?

The answers to these questions must be in favor of the societal interests rather than in the collective interests of individual institutions whether public or nonpublic. Reaching this conclusion, legislatures have established coordinating agencies in all except a few states for purposes of making the higher education establishment more reflective of the public interest, more rational in its development, and more careful in husbanding resources.

Does this exercise of legal authority on the part of the state create agencies which in turn encroach upon the autonomy of existing institutions? The answer is "Yes!" The amount of encroachment varies from one institution to another and from one state to another. That amount is dependent in large part on how much of the public interest has been imposed upon or ignored by the institutions involved and in part on how resources have traditionally been allocated and in what amounts. There is no denying that most states intend to impose a new order of authority. Such an order is bound to affect the current educational and financial practices of some institutions and the latent or expressed aspirations of a good many more. These impositions are substantive and are not only defensible but desirable. The statewide boards are the agents of the state in making these substantive incursions on institutional autonomy.

The instances of policy intervention which follow illustrate how they arise from the indiscriminate exercise of autonomy or the unrealistic aspirations of some institutions or the lack of adaptability of institutions to meet new educational needs.

One of the scholars previously cited (Palola) concludes that such planning (and its implementation) by coordinating boards has caused infringement on the autonomy of the smaller nonpublic colleges. The nonpublics today pride themselves on their freedom in contrast to public institutions. That exercise of freedom to excess has encouraged the infringement which concerns this scholar. It is no secret in higher educational circles that the long delay in the development of public colleges and universities in such states as New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey (as well as others) was the result of intensive opposition by the nonpublic institutions. The opposition continued long after it was apparent that great numbers of young people in those states were being deprived of educational opportunity. Setting the high costs associated with attending the colleges and determining the selectivity measures in admissions were exercises in autonomy. So was the plea to go slow in developing public institutions. Whose interests were served? Should statewide planning infringe on that kind of autonomy? Is this unwarranted substantive intervention by coordinating boards? The problem is not resolved in many states where the nonpublic institutions continue to oppose the opening of new public campuses. Whose interests are to be served when the public need is not coterminous with an institutional interest?

A second type of intervention involves the public institution which opposes new campuses in the state--unless they fall under its own governing control. The "branch campus" complex is found in many states, but it is epitomized in Ohio and Pennsylvania where one or more universities preempted the choice locations for junior colleges and new senior institutions. The branches are small and expensive to attend. New and different kinds of institutions might better have met the diverse needs of the youth. The college-going rates in both of these wealthy states is far below the national average and is seriously impaired in other states where branches are miniature replications of the parent university in types of students, types of faculty and types of programs. Diversity and opportunity are limited. When a state coordinating board plans the creation of new institutions, may not it rightfully infringe on the autonomy of the university which aspires to apply its own brand of uniform control and development on every new campus in the state? Must the statewide board delicately step aside while the state universities in Illinois, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and other states claim "to be all things to all men" when the evidence clearly indicates that they are highly selective in admissions, cater to families well above median state income levels and create branches in their own images? If so, whose autonomy and choice is sacrificed to protect autonomy of existing institutions?

All collegiate leaders plead for preservation of that happy diversity of colleges and universities with which the nation is blessed. They express alarm at the possible laying on of the dead hand of uniformity by statewide boards. Yet, attempts by such boards to create new types of institutions appealing to a different segment of youth and meeting newly recognized social needs are often opposed by these same leaders. The exact conditions vary among the states but two types of instances will illustrate the point.

First, the California Master Plan, dominated in the making by the University, gives a monopoly of all doctoral and several professional programs to the University. The eighteen state colleges may not offer degrees beyond the master's. A joint doctoral degree with the University is possible but the number actually developed in ten years can be counted on one hand. The reputation of the University as one of the most prestigious in the nation is based on its theoretical orientations and outstanding contributions to scholarship. Nevertheless, no public institutions exist in the state which meet the social needs which meet the social needs which are provided for by the "emerging" university in other states, as depicted by Southern and Northern Illinois, Western Michigan, Florida State and Iowa State to name only a few. All the evidence indicates those institutions attract a different kind of student (who eventually will fill different niches in the society) than the leading state university. California state colleges were frozen at their 1959 stage of development and remain so today. The limited diversity of senior level institutions in California can be attributed to direct opposition by the autonomous University which wishes to maintain the "integrity" and "quality" as well as monopoly of the doctorate.

The second example of opposition from existing schools to new types of opportunity is reflected in the development of the senior level college whose entering classes begin in the junior year. Florida and Illinois have created such institutions and several other states are planning them. In each case the statewide planning bodies attempt to overcome a deficiency in the existing system incurred by autonomous actions of the senior institutions, public and nonpublic. Simply stated, in exercising their autonomy they have largely ignored the needs of the junior college transfer student. They have been derelict. Yet, they also oppose establishment of the new type of college. Whose interests are to be

protected by the statewide board, whose autonomy sacrificed?

Getting a little closer to the internal aspirations, particularly of the former teachers colleges and state colleges, one cannot ignore the desire to emulate "the" state university. Primarily this means offering the doctorate and "doing research." Every coordinating board with any real power over programs has had to exercise it to keep every public senior college in the state from becoming a comprehensive university or competing directly in program with a neighboring nonpublic college. If the public institutions and their governing boards were not "held down" and their freedom limited, the state would have even less diversity in program, few if any state colleges would exist, and resources would be squandered. Indeed, in many states the names of colleges now signify "university" even though their programs do not--as yet. Professor John Darley of the University of Minnesota long ago stated that institutions of higher education tend toward replication rather than distinctiveness. Experience proves him right. To prevent replication the statewide board interferes directly in educational policy when it permits or refuses the establishment of new programs. Autonomy is circumscribed. Ironically, but understandably, the leading state university which is most opposed to strong coordination rarely, if ever, objects to these interventions in state college matters as an encroachment on autonomy.

A comparable condition in relation to admission standards has caused some states to grant controls over admissions to the higher boards. As institutions find more students available for entry they have tended to become more selective in admissions. Those colleges with doctorate aspirations are especially keen to create a bank of brains. Should all institutions be allowed to set high admission standards? Should some be kept open-door? Should others be encouraged to accommodate the middle abilities? Admission standards, of course, go hand in hand with the type of academic program offered. Does the coordinating board stand aside while autonomy is exercised to exclude all but the elite student? Does the board have a duty to maintain diversity in program and student opportunity although it means control in substantive educational policy?

These citations of policy intervention by statewide boards purposely focus on major policies having to do with the very core of autonomy. More could be cited along with a myriad of lesser import, all of which arise from the interests of institutions as opposed to the larger interests of society. The society has created higher boards to protect those larger interests. If these agencies did not exist, coordination would take place somewhere in state government--the governor's or legislative offices, or the state budget bureau. Who coordinates and with what understanding of the fundamental values of higher education is extremely important.

The reports of both Robert Berdahl and Ernest Palola indicate that super boards do, in fact, exercise discretion in their operations. Both scholars conclude that autonomy of institutions (using their respective definitions of autonomy) has in several cases been increased and in only a few specific cases has it been impaired.

This discussion has centered on coordinating agencies devoted to higher education and their influence on institutional autonomy. It does not deal with the fast growing trend for states to establish central management information systems and program budgeting (PPBS) which include all state services. Higher education may then indeed become just another state service to be treated as any other. On the other hand, the evidence so far presented by those who have studied intensively statewide higher education boards indicates a sensitivity and sympathetic understanding of those conditions essential to vigorous educational systems.